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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study was conducted of initial encounters in a class participating in Swedish municipal adult education. The class was composed mostly of immigrants and some native school dropouts, and the courses studied (through field observation) were equivalent to the senior level of the compulsory comprehensive school. The study focused on decision making and the power play between students and teachers, viewed as negotiation. Qualitative analysis resulted in a conceptual system for describing the negotiations. Using this system, characteristics of the decision-making process were described. One of the findings was that uniform explicit rules for decision making were lacking. Another finding was that students did influence decisions on certain topics, not because they were invited to do so, but at their own initiative. Students tried to influence the allocation of time and space for their studies, but they left the use of time for the teachers to decide. One conclusion of the study was that the students' subordination was conditional. (29 references) (Author/KC)

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Initial Encounters in Formal Adult Education

On decision-making in the classroom

Staffan Larsson

Report 1990:04
Department of Education and Educational Research
University of Göteborg

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INITIAL ENCOUNTERS IN FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

Abstract: The paper reports part of an ethnographic study on initial encounters in a class participa ting in Swedish municipal adult education. The courses studied were basically equivalent to the senior level of the compulsory comprehensive school. The study focusses on decision-making and the power play between students and teachers, viewed as negotiation. The qualitative analysis resulted in a conceptual system for describing the negotiations. Using this system, characteristics of the decision-making process were described. One of the findings was that uniform explicit rules for decision-making were lacking. Another was that student did influence decisions on certain topics, not because they were invited to do so, but at their own initiative. Students tried to influence the allocation of time and space for their studies but they left the use of time for the teachers to decide on. One conclusion was that the students' subordination was conditional.

Objective

This study is part of a larger evaluation of those parts of the curriculum for adult education that deal with student influence and teaching methods (Alexandersson et al 1985). But I hope that this analysis is of interest beyond the evaluation, as a study of a fundamental aspect of classroom life. In a wider context, classroom life not only prepares students for some aspects of everyday life; it has become an integral part of their everyday life. Thus this is not only a study about education, but about everyday life. Since the focus is on decisionmaking, it is not only an evaluation of the implementation of a curriculum, but of desicionmaking in a part of everyday life.

To stress these everyday characteristics, the classroom investigated was chosen from the perspective of being an ordinary classroom. This does not necessarily mean that it is representative. In a previous study within our

project 124 teachers were interweived about the characteristics of teaching in formal adult education (Larsson et al, 1990). To some extent that study can give some idea of how common certain phenomena are; although against a different background, as since it is not based on interveiw data. Rather it gives teachers' views on the investigated phenomena.

The context: Municipal adult education.

This is a study of a municipal adult education classroom in Sweden.This form of adult education offers courses that are basically equivalent to primary and secondary education. Municipal adult education was introduced in Sweden in 1967, and is one of several forms of adult education in Sweden. Popular education and folk high schools and labour market training, for instance, have longer histories than municipal adult education.

Those forms, in fact, constitute a system of adult education including the right to study leave for all employees and a system of student financial support (Olofsson & Rubenson, 1985, Rubenson, 1989). More than half the adult population attends some kind of adult education each year (SCB, 1988).It is argued that, as time goes by, Swedish adult education is becoming more and more integrated into a system of "recurrent education", i e integrated with the whole educational structure into a general system (Rubenson, 1987).

There are four general goals for all state-financed adult education in Sweden. These are equality, democracy, economic growth and the satisfaction of individual preferences. The goal of democracy forms the general background for this study.

In municipal adult education, priority of access is given in principle to students with short educations, immigrants and other groups that have limited economic, social and political resources. Financial support is also distributed according to the same principle (Fransson, & Larsson, 1989).

The classroom context.

The students in this study were taking courses that gave the same formal qualifications as studies at the senior level of the compulsory comprehensive school. However, there are several differences between the compulsary school and its corresponingform in adult education. These are outlined in the nationwide curriculum for municipal adult education. (Fransson, 1989). One difference is the gradingsystem, which is pass - fail in the municipal adult education system but consists of 5 grades in the compulsory school.

The students were typically 30 years old; many were immigrants, while others had a background as dropouts from compulsory school. With a few exceptions they funded their leave of absence from work (at subsistance levels) through the financial support system (Lundqvist, 1989). A few were unemployed, but most had a study leave from work that is given according to the law. All were full-time students.

The teachers, with the exception of one, were teaching exclusively in municipal adult education. They were all well qualified and experienced, although one had a very limited experience of teaching adults. For the majority of the students the period I am investigating is their first encounter with education in any form for a long time; the last time having been when they attended compulsory school. For some of the students this was their first encounter with their particular teacher and the course, although they had been studying for some time in municipal adult education.

DECISION-MAKING IN THE CLASSROOM.

As has already been mentioned, the focus in this paper is on decision-making in the classroom context. The concentration at the classroom level does not mean that a broader context is not important. It just means that this investigation focusses on describing interaction in the classroom. The aim was to gain some insights into characteristic features of how decisions can be made in municipal adult education.

The national curriculum for municipal adult education.

In the national curriculum there are notions about the students' options in influencing classroom decision-making that are relevant for this study.

> "Broadened and deepened student influence is a means of achieving general central goals and a method of increasing the efficiency of the education. One purpose of municipal adult education is for students to learn to plan and take responsibility for their studies. students should therefore be encouraged to take part in planning studies, in choosing forms of work and educational materials and in their evaluation."

There is an elaboration of this general description that discusses the constraints of the implementation of students' influence, in terms of time, students' views of teaching and their self-confidence. It is also pointed out that control must not be taken over by a small group of students. Finally there is a paragraph saying that the students should have information about the conditions for planning; for instance economic and organizational conditions, the content of the curriculum, etc.

Power in the classroom.

Power as an important aspect of classroom life is a classic theme in research literature. In "Life in classrooms" Jackson (1968) describes three fundamental facts of this life: crowding, praise and power. About power he writes:

> "School is also a place in which the division between the weak and the powerful is clearly drawn. This may sound like a harsh way to describe the separation between teachers and students, but it serves to emphasize a fact that is often overlooked, or touched upon gingerly at best. Teachers are indeed more powerful than students, in the sense of having greater responsibility for giving shape to classroom events, and this sharp difference in authority is another feature of school life with which students must learn to deal." (p.10)

Jackson put forward this conclusion a priori, as a matter of fact. I do not want to dispute this general conclusion; it is generally supported by several studies of the municipal adult education (Höghielm, 1985, Söderberg och Söderberg, 1988). However those are studies of ongoing activity in adult education classrooms which do not deal specifically with decisionmaking.

In this empirical study I want to look more closely into the problem of how the pattern of ongoing activity is estabished; thus giving more details on classroom interaction.

Initial encounters.

To be able to study this phenomenon, one must catch the process when it is as visible as possible. One way of doing that is to study the initial encounters in a class; the first time the students meet each other and the first time the teacher meets the class. Several such studies have been carried out mainly within two traditions: the "classroom management" tradition and the "ethnographic" tradition. Doyle, an exponent of the former tradition writes, on initial encounters:

> "From the perspective of classroom order, the early sessions of a school year are of critical importance (See Ball, 1980, Doyle, 1979,b, Smith Geoffrey, 1968). During this time, order is defined and the processes and procedures that sustain order are put into place." (Doyle, 1986, p. 409)

Ball writes from an ethnographic, symbolic interactionist perspective:

> "What Blumer's work suggests, particularly in terms of episodic encounters like lessons, is the particular importance of the initial meetings between actors for the negotiation and emergence of social perspectives, and patterns and routines of social interaction."(Ball, 1980, p. 145)

Beynon, who conducted an ethnographic study on initial encounters in a British secondary school, argues that this is also the time when routines are established, and consequently will be visible:

> "To use the analogy of Chomsky in linguistics, during initial encounters the 'deep structures' of interactional order can be observed being talked into existence, whereas all that can normally be observed in routine encounters are their abbreviated 'surface' representations". (Beynon, 1985, p.4)

Beynon also highlights that initial encounters are not only the situations where the routines are open to investigation but also the situations where the process of establishing those routines can be investigated:

> "During initial encounters teachers cannot hide behind routines, but must establish them" (Beynon, 1985, p.2)

Thus, in the process of establishing routines one can foresee that power will be demonstrated.

The research strategy: an ethnographic approach.

As previously noted, there are at least two traditions that have guided studies in the field of initial encounters. My study tries to follow an ethnographic tradition of the kind that has its theoretical bases in symbolic

interactionism. Power in the classroom can be described in this tradition as a process of negotiation. In this process conditions that gives advantages in the negotion can be objects for reflection. The classroom management tradition, by contrast, views power from the perspective of teacher effectiveness. Thus, students are looked upon as objects of the execution of power and not as parts in a process that will produce a certain order. I consider this latter perspective less complete since it does not give the full account of how a certain order is established, and focusses too much on teachers' actions (cf Larsson, 1982, 1983).

From my perspective the process should be looked upon as one where all actors take part in the establishment of negotiated order (cf Waller, 1932). Even not doing anything at all is to influence in a negative sense since the result would be different if that person did act. Alternately, if one person does not act, someone else has to act. Ball (1980, p.158) writes: "Initial encounters, then, constitute pessimistic social environments that necessitate, or are conducive to, the continual reflexive calibration of the congruence between the self and others. The doing of teaching requires the establishment of a communal we-relationship between teacher and pupil"

He continues, pointing out initial encounters as a situation where teaching is "thematized": "I am saying that in initial encounters the teacher may find that the thesis of "the natural attitude of everyday life" is empirically refuted....".

This is also true from a research perspective; they are situations where relations, for instance powerrelations, become visible and thus possible to "thematize" in a research context.

Thus, I will look upon the processes as negotiation. The qualitative distribution of power is thus something that can be evaluated as an empirical measure of who had the most influence on a certain decision. Another aspect of interest is the form the negotiations take. Finally, conditions that give advantages in negotiation are discussed.

An exemple of classroom negotiation.

To provide a starting point for this discussion, I present a passage taken from my fieldnotes, where the process of negotiation becomes visible. It

provides us with a basis for discussing how to conceive of this process. Below I analyse other passages with the help of some conceptual distinctions that were one of the outcomes of the study.

The passage is from the first lesson in a course in biology. It occurred in the middle of the lesson, when the teacher was presenting a plan for the course:

"The teacher then says that we can adjust how much time that can be used on different parts of the subject. Then there is supposed to be a special study taking up one-third of the time: "You choose two special studies: 25 lessons. And you report in writing" A question from one of the students: " Are we going to have 2 tests?" The teacher: "I have not mentioned tests". A student: "I want several short tests". Most students say the same thing - no one argues against this. The teacher: "What do the rest want?" One argues for short tests. The teacher interprets the situation as the students want several short tests. (The students that are putting forward their views are not new; they have been studying for some time in municipal adult education. They put forward their views - ask questions and give suggestions. The teacher cannot always answer these and refers to the fact that she has not been in this school before.) Then the teacher outlines the content of each lesson from the first to the last lesson. After that she says: "We cannot have more than a 5-minute break". One student, Henny, protests: "Then we cannot get to the coffeeroom!" The teacher: "You cannot get 80 minutes of teaching if you get a 10-minute break". (She means that each lesson must be 80 minutes so that the total amount of teaching will be the stipulated 80 hours.) There is a discussion. Henny gets slightly angry and says that it doesn't need to be so exact. Maria supports this. Bengt does so too and says that it isn't neccessary to chase seconds. Lotta and Maria try to sort things out. The teacher says that she does not know how this is done in other subjects or in this school. Roger argues with Henny about the proper way to calculate teaching time. The teacher: "I have to think about what to do about the break". Roger continues to argue. The teacher gives up: Maybe it can be solved your way".

The lesson continued with the presentation of the syllabus.

Discussion

There are several things to be noted here about the process of negotiation in an everyday setting. The first thing I want to highlight is that the students, collectively, can put forward their positions well and argue effectively. Thus they demonstrate their potential strength, although the passage is not typical of the teaching routine, from the perspective of who is dominant.

However, in two different situations they succeeded in arguing for their demands and, as far as I can see, in "winning" (it is not altogether clear from the field notes exactly what the results were, but the expressions used suggested that the teacher accepted the students' demands) on both the question of the tests and the breaks.

In the case of the tests, the decision was made through some kind of majority rule, however informal and vague. In the second case, the decision was made through argument between the teacher and some of the students. Here it seemed as if the argument per se and the persistence of the students led to the result.

However, in those cases there were also circumstances around the arguments that formed the basis of relative strength in the arguments. One that is obvious in this case is "knowledge". And in this classroom the knowledge of the ordinary way of doing things in this school seemed crucial. Contrary to what is normally the case, the teacher's obvious lack of such knowledge gave some of the students a stronger position because they had that knowledge. Thus they had the means of influencing the decision. In the first case the motive was not clear from the text, but in the second case it was obvious that they wanted to be able to have a cup of coffee or a cigarette, and were thus motivated to press their case.

Thus far we can conclude that the students have shown their potential in influencing the classroom order of things. We can also see that this was based upon knowledge about the - "traditional" way of doing things in the school.

Since the students who started the arguments had attended the school for some time and thus gained the knowledge that was effective, we cannot

know if their way of seeing their role in decision-making is an effect of their experience of schoollife in municipal adult education, or something learned from everyday life in this kind of society. This is further discussed below.

Another aspect of this kind of negotiation is that the students influenced the creation of a classroom order at their own initiative. Student influence on decision making in the classroom is usually regarded as a policy that should be implemented by the teachers (for instance the curriculum presupposes it, to my understanding). This is not the case here: the students created the situation themselves and the result is obviously not an act of benevolence on the teachers' part. The teacher did not get what she wanted. The result was not in her interest, at least as she has expressed it. I will return to this problem with the idea that teachers may facilitate student influence in the classroom, after we have looked at several instances of negotiation.

Seeing this lesson as a whole, and not only the passage quoted here, it is clear the students do not try to influence the content of the course or the pedagogy. They do not even try to discuss it. What they do instead is to ask the teacher for more details and concrete examples. They never oppose the plan as laid out. However, the "old" students take part in the explanation of content and pedagogical structure assuming the teacher's role. They refer to "what is normally done" and to tradition. Thus they do not act in their own interests or on personal conviction, but instead reproduce the everyday order and traditions. Consequently, they do not have a pedagogical policy, or a policy on course content or other aspects of the formal aim of education.

Trying to conceptualize negotiations in the classroom.

To develop the analysis further, the description given so far is used as a basis for creating a conceptual system. The function of qualitative analysis must in some respect be the enhancement of the conceptual clarity or richness of a phenomenon (Larsson, 1988). Qualitative analysis in a wide sense is linked to the enhancement of the means of communication. This can be accomplished either through making someone aware of others' perspectives, i.e. a horisontal broadening of perspective, or as in this study, trying to make an analysis than goes beyond common ways of thinking. In

this latter sense the perspective of a phenomenon is vertically deepened, creating substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) rather than formal theory. Whether the term theory is a meaningful one in this context, is a matter of definition and I prefer not to make overly pretentious claims on the status of my conceptual creation.

Concepts.

Presenting a conceptual framework this early in the text gives the impression that it was preconstructed. This is not the case, but rather a consequence of a certain logic underlying writing texts, where the order is shaped in the interest of the reader, and not from structure in reality. The framework was, in fact, produced more than six months after the fieldnotes. The interim covered 2 months of daily participation and another 2 and a half less intensive participation, and interviews were also made during this time.

I think two main aspects of negotiation can be distinguished from the description presented above. The first has to do with "winning" and "losing" and tactics and is referred to as power-play. The other deals with the contents of the negotiation and is referred to as policy. In the situation referred to we had two power-plays, each on specific issue. In each power-play there were two standpoints expressing the different policies.

We can also see that the negotiations and the way they turned out were conditioned by circumstances, constraints, or to use a term with a strong tradition in Swedish educational research: frames (cf Dahllöf, 1967, Lundgren, 1972). These frames are also important for the mere existence of negotiations and set the conditions for the options in negotiations. The frames thus delimit a playing field, which is also delimited by the natures of the power-play and the policy.

In the description cited above, the negotiations were rather open, in the sense that actors declared their policy and that they were clear about there being a decision at stake. Thus the negotiations were explicit. Many times, as demonstrated below, the negotiations are not declared openly, but are implicit (Beynon refers to Woods on - open and closed negotiations. Beynon, 1985 p 20). It can be inferred from "circumstantial evidence" that

a decision was made, that a rule, routine or something was introduced without having been discussed, commented upon or otherwise made obvious to everyone. An implicit policy is thus an undeclared policy that a part does not declare. In fact, this is the main way decisions are made in the classroom.

Using these conceptual "tools", I go on to describe the encounters between the students and four different teachers. In all cases it is their first meeting which is described. In each case I interpret the negotiations in a semi-formal way, using these concepts and also everyday language. In my veiw there can be no strict division between everyday language and "scientific" language.

Four encounters - four kinds of negotiation

In the passage discussed above, a biology teacher met the students. This section describes their first contact with the other four teachers that most of them were going to have this term. All four teachers had been doing adult education for many years.

In the first, quite unusual situation, there are two teachers in the class. This is because it is the introductory hour; for most of the students it is their first lesson in their new life as a student. The teachers are teachers of English and Swedish.

The introduction

I quote from the fieldnotes:

> "At 8.45 the first students arrive. By 9.00 there are 16. No one says anything; it is so quiet that every move can be noticed. Ville (the teacher of Swedish) arrives and joins Sven, the English teacher, who is already there. The teachers start. They introduce themselves by name and home telephone number and tell the students to write this down. Then they tell the students that they will be tested and placed in the appropriate group in English. The test is to be looked upon as a 'guideline for the students', they say."

In this passage one can see that the teachers gained "command" through introducing a "sensitive" question immediately after their introduction of themselves. There are no signs that the teachers were presenting the test as something that can be discussed or negotiated. Thus their move is an implicit move in the power-play since they do not make explicit the basis for the decisionmaking. However, they are explicitly declaring the policy; that the test will be used to allocate the students to different groups. The remark, that the test should be looked upon as a guideline is information, but it also helps to make the students accept the test-taking, since the test appears less threatening. Thus the policy is not completely explicit.

The overall result is that the teachers establish a part of the classroom routines without any interference from the students. The students have a limited knowledge of different sides of classroom life and of their possibilities to influence that situation. The conditions under which both parties are working are is ones where the teachers have had the time and knowledge to plan, before there are students present to negotiate with. This gives then an advantage in terms of time to foresee the situation.

The field-notes continue:

> "More students arrive until there are 20. The teachers tell the students where to find different things in the school and then there is an introduction from student union; three representatives of the union. They tell the students that the union is important, especially when it comes to improving financial conditions for students. They also point out that courses sold to local industries are excluding ordinary students from computor training courses. (I did not understand the details of this.)"

This part of the introduction continues without interference from the students. It is implicitly understood that the students are subordinate to the established plan. On the other hand, the union presentation can be viewed as a sign that students can have a say on a general level. That is, however, not made explicit and remains an implicit message. Nothing in the union speech is directly relevant to the classroom negotiations or refers to students' influence in the classroom decisionmaking. One can also point out here that the statements in the national curriculum about student influence were never mentioned in any situation that I attended during my field-work. This

gives students a disadvantage in terms of lack of knowledge, since they do not generally read the national curriculum. The field-notes continue:

"Then it is my turn to introduce myself. I do so by saying that I am an "extra"-student, who is going to follow the class and try to understand and describe daily life in municipal adult education." I try to explain my presence, without creating opposition to it. I do not mention that they could oppose my presence. This move is an implicit power-play and my policy is to avoid undermining my own plans. The policy is thus also implicit. I succeed to the extent that I avoid arousing open opposition to my study. I achieve this through - describing my role as similar to theirs and the presentation of a rather harmless and vague objective. The basis for my advantage is their lack of knowledge. The field-notes continue:

"The teachers arrange the students so that they can talk with each other in pairs; I join a pair, they discuss their economies, their vocational backgrounds and then their futures, all very informally and unpretentiously. Then, the schoolday is finished and everyone leaves, not to see each other again until after the weekend." The "day" is only around 2 hours long.

Here the students accept, as before, the teachers' implicit powerplay. They accept the teachers' undeclared right to make decisions on their own about what should be done as well as how it should be done. According to my notes there are no signs of discussion about this. The policy is explicit here.

The first Swedish lesson

If we now move to the second day and analyse it, we meet the group in their first class in Swedish. I quote from my notes:

> "The class gathers again. They come in one by one and sit spread out in the classroom. Almost no one says anything. Ville, the Swedish teacher, arrives. He tells them that they must be tested. The reason is that they must be placed at the proper level on a staircase 'where you belong'. 'It is to your own advantage'. 'It is nothing to be afraid of'."

Ville makes the same kind of moves as on the first day with regard to testing, although this time he explicitly reveals a bit more of his policy.

Although the purpose of the test is still described in a rather abstract way, Ville also uses a technique we have seen before to avoid opposition or avoid anxiety among the students. He underscores the harmless nature of the situation. Thus the policy is to some extent implicit. One can also interpret this move as a move to secure the implementation of the teachers' plans. We can refer to the idea that "smoothness" in the movements between events is something that teachers want.

"A discussion starts about the fact that some of the students have taken a test in Swedish before. Some say that the immigrants have taken the Swedish test. Ville says that this time it is a test on Swedish as a mother tongue, and that the immigrants are now going to be tested on the same basis as the Swedish students." We can see that the students explicitly oppose Ville's plans. It is not an opposition to the testing as a whole but a question about who is supposed to be tested. The students' policy is thus to question the rule that everyone should be tested. By explaining the difference between the tests and thus explicitly expressing his policy, the teacher coerces the students to accept this and the testing of everyone is accepted without further opposition. The field-notes continue:

> "Then Ville presents the text-books. The students start to ask about different practical matters".

Here Ville is deciding on an important part of their future through the undeclared decision about which textbooks they are going to use. The students accept this without opposition. The students' lack of knowledge about the curriculum gives Ville an advantage. Another basis can be the students' lack of policy, i e ideas about alternatives. Instead they ask for information in different matters, thus implicitly putting Ville in the position of being the one that knows about an already existing structure. This could be interpreted as a taken for granted subordination to "tradition".

This pattern, students asking Ville explaining, shaped a good proportion of the rest of the lesson. Let us therefore go on to examine the next initial encounter between the students and a teacher. This time it is the maths teacher.

The first maths lesson.

I quote from my field notes:

> "After a break it is time for another teacher to meet the class. this is Nisse who is the maths teacher. He introduces himself: 'My name is Nisse and my phone number is 13 45 26. The textbook looks like this'".

Nisse implicitly defines his role at once, from the perspective of power, through saying: "The textbook looks like this". Through this move he immediately determines that he decides on that matter. He does not invite any discussion about alternatives. The students accept this, implicitly, by not opposing.

> "After some questions about Nisse's name and about the name of the textbook, which they did not hear, Nisse presents the plan for the term, and especially stresses when the tests are to be."

Very briefly but effectively, Nisse sets up the most important features of the work for the whole term. From the perspective of power play Nisse accomplishes this through implicitly defining the decision-making as his task. There is no opposition, and effectively the students accept this, without opposition. From interviews with Nisse it is clear that he views himself as the one who is in charge of the classroom and who teaches almost as if it were an art.

The basis for Nisse's strength could be the students' lack of knowledge about the curriculum, as well as a lack of alternative policy on the matter. There is reason to believe they lacked both.

let us leave maths here and move on to the students' next encounter, with the geography teacher.

The first lesson in geography.

The geography teacher, Eva, has a quite different approach. In her classroom decisions are not made without discussion. Different opinions

are expressed and there are conflicts, but without aggression. I quote from my field notes:

> "Eva came late, since she had a different version of the timetable than the class. Maria took the initiative to do the register after a quarter of an hour just as Eva arrived. She had a different version of the timeschedule. We discussed the time and voted - the majority preferred our schedule (rather than Eva's)"

We can see that the first problem to be dealt with is decided on by discussion, followed by voting. Unfortunately, I can't tell who took the initiative to this - why those forms of decision-making were developed. But this was an explicit negotiation, with a declared form of decisionmaking. Thus in this case the students had the power to decide. They also had an explicit policy.

> "Eva then checked the register - a long list of names of people who are absent (and some who are present). Maria takes the responibility for the class and answers for it."

We can here see that Maria takes a leading role in this case.

> "Eva wants the students to interview each other in pairs. There are protests: Eva wants a geographical presentation of the class. She gets that, but without the pairs. Everyone says where they come from and where they have travelled."

Here Eva make an implicit move with an explicit policy, but the group rejects it. Thus they make it into an explicit negotiation, where the students position is that they don't want to do what they have already done in other subjects. Thus they are using a growing experience of the cotext to form a policy and gain power. There is a compromise: Eva gets her presentation but the group doesn't have to work in pairs, is spared the repetition. The presentation occupies the rest of the lesson. The policies are explicit from both parties.

After the break Eva reads the aims for geography from the national curriculum aloud for the group. She also distributes a stenciled copy of them to the group.

"Eva: 'Is there anything you react to with respect to these aims - are they your aims?' No reaction. Richard is occupied with his calculator. Roger is taking some notes. Janne is yawning. The others listen. 'Is this what you did in school?'" Answer: 'Mountains and towns and so on' Eva: 'It is not at all organized like that, but rather we will look at phenomena and concepts in order to see how things work. Maria: 'Anyway it is important to know where the countries are. I want to know about the map'. Eva: 'We have the nordic map in the classrooms. The map is very important; I want everybody to have a map'. Trinidad says that she has one - and then she chats with Richard."

Here we can see what is happening when Eva uses the national curriculum explicitly in the class. She reads the curriculum, the text of which is supposed to become the playing field for the following discussion. The curriculum becomes the implicit basis for the discussion, a decision that is not discussed.

The discussion starts hesitantly and fades fast. With the exception of Maria the group rejects Eva's invitation; one could conceive of this as the students victory in a negotiation by ignoring Eva's move. This is done through demonstrating lack of interest (Richard, Roger and Janne) or through not responding at all - being passive. In this way it is a kind of implicit power play. The basis for the students' implicit policy (not to take part) could be lack of ideas, because of lack of knowledge.

The exception is Maria, who expresses her opinion, which seems to be adverse to what is expressed in the curriculum and also to Eva's opinion. However, Eva uses Maria's opinon to argue for a constant use of the world atlas. A broader discussion about the content of the course and its general design thus fades away.

Instead there is some kind of implicit compromise, where Maria's opinion is responded to, but where the other students disinterest is not further dealt with. The teacher does not follow up her own initiative.

Methodological comment: In this situation, there is a need to comment somewhat on the researcher's influence on events. From the standpoint of ethnography, the researcher and his data are "mutually interdependant".

The data the researchers gets hold of is dependent on the identity informants give them. For instance, a male researcher gets different informations than a female one, because the persons he is studying interact differently than with a woman. They also tell him different things.

In my case there may have been a problem here with my identity as a educational researcher. In Eva's eyes I probably represented people who are in favour of ideas like students' decision-making (this is often the general opinon among teachers in Sweden about educational researchers). In this case, that would mean that I could have been responsible for the teacher's move to start engaging the students in decisionmaking. On the other hand, the development after the start could not reasonably be attributed to such an influence, since as I see it, it was in contradiction to what would have been expected, if her motive was to please me. Therefore I consider that part of the process as one where my part was not significant.

Back to the geography lesson:

The discussion about maps is displaced in the way of becoming a talk about an example that soon becomes not an example but an end in itself. However after a while there was a discussion about the prices of textbooks which ends with Eva's unilateral decision about what kind of books should be bought.

After this Roger makes a move:

> "Roger wants a weekly course plan. Eva does not. Roger wants it, because he has so many subjects, etc."

Eva rejects this proposition. Even if Roger declares his reasons explicitly (if not completely, as is shown later), Eva wins, probably because Roger can't mobilize support from the other students. Later however Roger comes back, with a modified proposition:

> "Roger want to know what they are going to do next month; he has a job then (and must be away from school). Per: 'In my experience it does not work anyway (probably meaning the plans)".

Here Roger gets opposition from the other students rather than support and he drops his case. Eva's reason for her opposition is not very explicit in the classroom, but according to an interview with her it is very fundamental.

She is very strongly against planning and wants classroom events to be more spontaneous.

The last important sequence where decisions were made about the future was initially about grading. Eva informs the class that the scale in the lower level of municipal adult education is a pass/fail scale. She tells the students what her requirements are for letting someone pass in geography: "Eva: 'You don't get any grades' (meaning: a multi-level grading scale). Eva tells them what is important and writes on the blackboard: 1. Attendance; physical and mental. 2. The homework must be done before the next class. 3. There will be a special study - a country or something else. Work here and at home. Eva: 'If this works out I have no need of tests. If it does not work out I will have to have tests."

This is not opposed by the students, who implicitly accept this by not saying anything. Thus Eva alone has determined the frames, fundamental to the forms of work in the following term. The form for decision-making is not declared here but is, implicitly, in the hands of the teacher.

A summary of the encounter between the students and the geography teacher gives the picture of much more involvement on the students' part than in mathematics. There is an example of a voting procedure, ie. the form of decision-making was declared. There were also spontaneous powerplays where students put forward their wishes. The teacher also invited the students to give their opinions. With a few exceptions of minor importance, the teacher "won" the negotiations, either through the lack of opposition or through rejecting propositions from students. The forms of decision-making were never explicit except in the voting case. From the point of veiw of contents, students influenced the allocation of breaks and lessons, but did not influence the content or forms of the studies.

On generalization from a case.

There are common patterns in the power aspect of the negotiations. These patterns can be conceived of as potential characteristics of the kind of formal adult education that forms the context for this case-study. However the question of how to generalize from a case-study must be answered, so

that there are no misunderstandings about how the conclusions are to be interpreted in terms of generalisation.

In my understanding: my interpretation has the form of an analysis where a set of concepts is constructed for use in interpreting my fieldnotes. For the reader to be able to understand the way I use my concepts, I demonstrate my "work" explicitly. Thus not only the concepts but the meaning of these concepts is also shown in examples of how they are used The "act" of interpretation is thus made explicit. The meaning of a concept can thus be identified through examining the consequences of its use. This procedure can presumably be legitimazed in pragmatic philosophy, i e Peirce's theory of meaning (Wennerberg, 1966).

My concepts, the way I use them and the conclusions are a whole; i e my conclusions presuppose my concepts and the way they are used. The interpretation is a way of seeing. The reader can take part of my concepts, the field-notes and my conclusions and ask herself if it is reasonable. The reader can be critical and reject, or accept them.

This brings us to the question of how this work can be useful in other cases, other contexts. The part of the analysis that is transferrable is the concepts and their use how they are given meaning in the act of interpretation. The reader can use them by "applying" them to other cases. However, there is no possibility of predicting in what cases this can be done; it is rather a question of "knowing" the concepts and thus be able to "see" processes of decision-making as they are presented here.

CONCLUSIONS: COMMON PATTERNS OF DECISION-MAKING

Jackson's conclusions generally appear to be valid: 1. Teachers are more powerful than students. 2. They act as if their power were taken for granted. The students act accordingly in most cases; they act as if the teachers' power was taken for granted.

Conditional subordination

However, the students do not completely act in ways that are subordinate to the teacher. Sometimes they make demands and argue for them. Those cases, however, always seem to be related to decisions about breaks, the delimitations of periods, the quantity of tests and their distribution over time. There is also one case, where students demand explicit details of the distribution of the course contents over the term. Students who take the initiative in these cases are not beginners, but have started their studies several terms earlier they are "experienced students".

Students' demands are met in different ways by different teachers, but it is clear that the students think they have legitimate reasons to influence the decision-making in specific areas. These areas had to do with the allocation of their own time and space. It also seems as if the students expect that their demands will be satisfied in those areas. On the other hand, it seems as if the students do not try to influence or question the teacher's dominance when it comes to the selection of contents, or the structure of the instructional process, as long as it does not relate to the allocation of the students' time and space.

Thus, to sum up, the students act as if they think they are justified in influencing the allocation of time and space, but leave the use of the time in the hands of the teachers. One can look upon this as a taken for granted structure underlying the explicit negotiations.

It may also be noted that the students are capable of influencing their situation, when they conceive of their influence as legitimate. Thus their subordination is conditional.

Moreover, in most cases, the students do not influence their situation of the initiative of the teacher. Instead, they take the initiative of influencing on their own and often in opposition to the teacher.

When the teachers try to involve the students in decision-making the students sometimes accept and sometimes they reject these attempts. It seems as if the students' actions are not so much based on what the teacher does, but instead on the content of the decision-making. It is as if there were unwritten rules that delimited teachers' authority to a certain domain. Furthermore, the same could be said about the students; that there are unwritten rules about the domain in which students had a legitimate say.

It also seems that the interest on the part of the students is linked to what is directly important in their life-situation outside the classroom. When it comes to aspects of life within the walls of the classroom, they have little interest in influencing this life.

The absence of uniform rules for decision-making.

A striking trait of decision-making in the classroom is the lack of a uniform routine for decisionmaking. There are no openly declared uniform rules in operation. With regard to who decides on what or how descisions should be made. Individual teachers have different attitudes. Routines differ according to the mix of teacher and students (the teacher supposedly being the most important ingredient).

This absence of uniform rules often does not exist in other parts of society. It can thus be conceived as a characteristic trait of decision-making in formal adult education, at least in Sweden. Both in bureucratic and democratic decision-making a common trait is uniformity in rules. In the case of bureacracy the aim is to secure the hierarchical structure and a uniformity in "output" of decisions, whoever is in charge. In the case of democratic descisions the aim is to ensure that power is equally distributed and decisions are in accordance with the will of the assembly or gathering.

In both cases this uniformity makes it possible for individuals to act adequately in any situation where decisions are made as long as they move within the same structure; once an individual has learned the rules for democratic decision-making she can, in principle, take part in every democratic assembly. The same is true, in principle, true about bureacracies, at least within a specific institution.

In our study both the absence of explicitly declared rules as well as the variation in implicit rules for decision-making are striking. With a somewhat crude expression it could be described as following a law of the jungle. As a consequence of different constraints (the playing field) the teacher normally has the strongest position in such an interaction.

The lack of openly declared rules for decision-making is, on the other hand, also typical of other aspects of everyday life, for instance family life. This gives us a possibility to use metaphors used in investigations of negotiations in families. The theory of communication elaboraudents can take part in decisions but still be controlled by the teachers. The same thing can happen with reversed rules; students can take control of the metalevel (cf Larsson, 1983)

Discussion.

It may initially be suggested that the students see the teacher as an expert, and that they cannot intrude on the teachers' "domain". This explanation, however, does not explain the students' lack of interest when the teachers invite them to take part in decision making. Another view is that the students lack a policy: they do not know what they want. To gain some insight into this, we can look at deviant cases; exceptions from the general rule that students lack policies.

In one case there was an experienced student who wanted to influence the kind of test that should be used. Another deviant case was the one where students in geography protested against a certain kind of introduction of each other as they had already had several similar introductions. In both cases students had experience of how the school normally dealt with the topic.

If we accept that the lack of student influence on the instructional process and in the choice of content is related to the teachers' possession of an elaborated policy and the students' lack of one, we may ask whether this is an inevitable situation.

First, it is possible to foresee the development of a policy by students as the students gain experience. On the other hand, such knowledge is of limited value if most important decisions are made in the first days or weeks - decisions that fix the rest of the course. Second, the absence of student policy is underscored by the lack of discussion in this matter among the students as a group. Furthermore, it can be argued that the basis for the lack of policy is that the students are not aware of the alternatives that might be realistic. The teachers in my case do not present any alternatives of profound importance. There are several reasons for this. One is that the curriculum sets limits, even if teachers according to empirical findings do not seem to care whether they follow it. Another reason concerns the teachers' perspectives on their role. They consider themselves experts and as such think it is legitimate to exercise their individual power in these areas.

Whether or not these power relations are inevitable also depends upon the time and space frames in teaching. As schools are presently organized, the students are simply not there when the planning of the term is done. This is probably the most difficult constraint on the students' influence on classroom events. The teacher must often plan the teaching situation before meeting the students and so he or she creates a predictable and controlled situation which meets the students' expectations of good teaching. It is probably also true that planning is necessary to attain the goals in the curriculum.

A possible compromise here is the construction and presentation of alternatives to the students which can form a basis for discussion and decisionmaking.

Findings from the "124 teacher interveiw study" (Larsson et al., 1990) can give some information on teachers' self-reports on students' influence. According that study, 69 % of the teachers were positive to the idea of student participation in decisionmaking. There was a variation between subjects; the fewest in physics (50%) and the most in English (84%).

However, when they report about the content of the decisions, influence appears to be limited. Twenty-four percent of the teachers say that students take part in the planning of the course, but in less than half of these cases is there student influence on the contents or work-pattern. The planning is, for exemple, when tests or homework should be done. Another influence option was giving the students choices between alternatives. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers reported that this was done in their classroom. In half of those cases the choices were on more important aspects of the studies; mostly about which parts of the contents should be stressed. A frequent comment from the teachers was that students often have little to say and normally accept the teachers' recommendations.

If teachers attempt to engage the students in decision-making in difficult areas, this should be based on the teachers judgement that it will be worthwhile. It presupposes some notion that makes student participation in everyday decision-making important. In the "124 teacher interview study" questions were asked about the reason for engaging students in decision-making in the classroom. 24% veiwed student participation as something that is a matter of democracy, i e they veiwed it from a civic, political viewpoint. 70% had a notion of student participation as a means of making the education in some way more effective - a didactic perspective. These findings support a conclusion that teacher often do not view student participation from a civic veiwpoint, but rather as a means of making the teaching process effective. Thus student participation becomes conditional, depending on its effectiveness as a means in teaching. The civic notion presupposes a vision of participatory democracy as central to everyday life (Nelson, 1980), either as a preparation for everyday life or from the perspective that education is a part of everyday life. Pateman (1970) describes participatory democracy as something unconditional, as something not instrumental but a goal in itself. To my understanding students' involvement in decision-making must be related to that specific veiw of democracy, if it is to be veiwed at all as something having to do with democracy. Other ways of conceiving of democracy do not conceive of decision-making in an adult education context as relevant to democracy.

The idea that adult education should prepare the student for democratic decision-making in everyday life can be veiwed as problematic in connection with adult education. It becomes paradoxical that some adult

citizens (students) apriori should be in need of such a training from other citizens (teachers). It presupposes in some sense that teachers are more democratic citizens than students, in spite of the fact that they are equal in terms of political rights and often in experience.

Conflicts in adult education as instrumental to policies.

Examining the kinds of power play I have described in my classroom, I conclude that, with a few exceptions, they are almost always instrumental in relation to a certain policy. Thus they are not plays about power but about concret goals. If the students wishes are fulfilled by the teacher, there is no basis for action. Studies of school classrooms show that this is not always the case in primary and secondary school.

Ball (1980) argues that it is necessary for pupils to 'test out' teachers in order to ascertain the teacher's definition of the situation. This is necessary information if pupils are to be able to deal with teachers in successful ways. Beynon (1985) gives a detailed account of different kinds of power-play that are not instrumental to policies. They are executed according to Beynon, for the sake of learning the teachers' way of handling power. Beynon calls this "sussing teachers".

Those kinds of power-play seem to be nonexistent in my classroom, except for a few deviant cases. This lack of "sussing" may be seen as a possible characteristic trait in adult education.

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